

**THE POLICY
OF BELGIUM
IN HER OVERSEAS
TERRITORIES**

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TERRITORIES

Address by

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*to the House of Representatives in Brussels
on June 26, 1957*

published by
INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
FOR THE BELGIAN CONGO AND RUANDA URUNDI
1st Directorate
5, RUE DU TRONE, BRUSSELS

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I SHOULD like to open this debate by recalling the fundamental principles of Belgian colonial policy and indicating the broad lines by which they are being worked out.

Arduous ascension.

The Belgian Congo as we conceive it is not a land of conquest in which the native is no more than a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. It is a Belgian territory; and its inhabitants enjoy in principle all the rights which belong to the Belgians of the mother country.

In the year 1908 when Belgium responded to the appeal of king Leopold II, she did so for the sake of carrying out a task of emancipation. In accepting her great king's magnificent gift, and deciding to extend her sovereignty over the huge territory of what was then the Independent State of the Congo, Belgium was fully conscious of the obligations she was assuming. It is her firm intention to carry on with her work and to abandon no part of that sovereignty which is her guarantee of its fulfilment.

The Belgians took with them into the Congo their spirit of initiative and their zeal for work. Their conception of the relationship between man and man was free from all manner of prejudice, and they had a great sense of the common weal and of honour and honesty in the conduct of public affairs. Their authority was based on agreements specifically entered into with the tribal chiefs, and they resorted to arms only for the sake of purging the territory of the Arab slave traders. While they are laying the foundations of the economic expansion of the future, they were waging a threefold war against sickness, ignorance and economic distress. Today this warfare has broadened into a crusade for public health, for intellectual development and for economic and social progress.

The Congo of those days was an immense territory divided into a great number of mutually hostile communities, all of them living on

a closed subsistence economy. The populations had scarcely left the prehistoric stage and it was only the Belgian administration which gave the territory any semblance of coherence. In such a territory a political organisation on the accustomed lines of the older countries, was obviously unthinkable.

The task ahead was to persuade the natives to climb patiently and persistently up the steps of the ladder of progress on which we and our ancestors had spent many centuries of effort. It was to lay the foundations of a civilization, based in equality on the rights and duties of man in which there should be no discrimination save what is based on the merits and talents of the individual. It was to be a civilisation founded on respect for the person and the dignity of man, on tolerance, on kind heartedness, on concord and on a discipline based upon the common interest.

Such a line of development necessarily demands constant progress in the economic and social, in the intellectual and in the technical field. It means that the coloured population, so long as it has not made good its long arrear, should be specially cared for and protected. The priority which must needs be given to the interest of the native populations, had already been defined by King Leopold II when he said « Our first efforts must be devoted to ensuring the free expansion of the native peoples. This means a material and moral regeneration of the native populations, and it is the programme of all of us to set to work on this. Every step forward which we make, must be marked by an improvement in the condition of the natives. » Since then each of the kings of the Belgians has echoed these words of the astute founder of overseas Belgium.

Our policy for the trustee of Ruanda-Urundi is, with due allowance for local conditions, based on the same principles. A number of measures have lately been taken, and others are being considered; plans have been worked out with a view to promoting a balanced economy and providing funds for investment finance. The innate wisdom of the





native populations and the confident collaboration between the Belgian and the local authorities, make it possible to forecast, in a not too distant future, a considerable expansion in this territory.

Humanization.

In the Congo's long and laborious upward progress, the human element has played an essential part.

The humanization of physical conditions has been carried on steadily and ever more rapidly. It has been secured by health measures, by improvements in diet, by the practice of curative medicine and subsequently by preventive medicine. Most of the epidemic and endemic diseases have been conquered; sleeping sickness for example attacked only one person in 1955 for every hundred who were attacked twenty years earlier, and may thus be said to have virtually disappeared. There is one hospital bed per 170 inhabitants, or more than double the number in 1935. The enormous machine of public health is one of the most effective in the world. Preventive medicine is in the hands of government services, mobile health units and philanthropic societies. There are vaccination campaigns, free ante-natal and post-natal consultations and others for young children and school children. For workers too, there are consultations organised by the employers as required under the social legislation.

The humanization of work has been one of the outstanding features of Belgium's work in Africa. One aspect was the organisation of many forms of transport, and thus the ending of the exhausting work of portage.

Tools have been improved to lighten the work of the cultivator, the planter, the woodman and the builder. In some districts the beast of burden is used but, above all, mechanical means have been introduced. The same story can be told of the extractive and the transform-

... Most of the epidemic and endemic diseases have been mastered. The hospitals have a bed per 170 inhabitants ...

ing industries. In former days, more than half the working days, for all ages and both sexes was taken up with the treatment of crops, the drying, the threshing, the cleaning, the graining, the shelling, the retting, and the grinding; nowadays, more and more of this is done by means of small machines.

Everywhere the forces of nature are being progressively harnessed to take the place of the arduous labour of man.

The humanization of social relationships was already a matter of concern for the pioneers of long ago. In our own period it is the big problem.

« The essential problem for us today » said king Baudouin in his gracious speech of July 1st, 1955, « is that of human relationships between the black and the white peoples. »

A number of steps are being taken to deal with this development with ever increasing rapidity. Steps taken include the increasing care which is put into the training of emigrants to the Congo; the general orientation of education in Africa itself; the gradual but increasingly rapid suppression of racial discrimination, and the appraisal of Colonial civil servants in regards to their behaviour towards the natives.

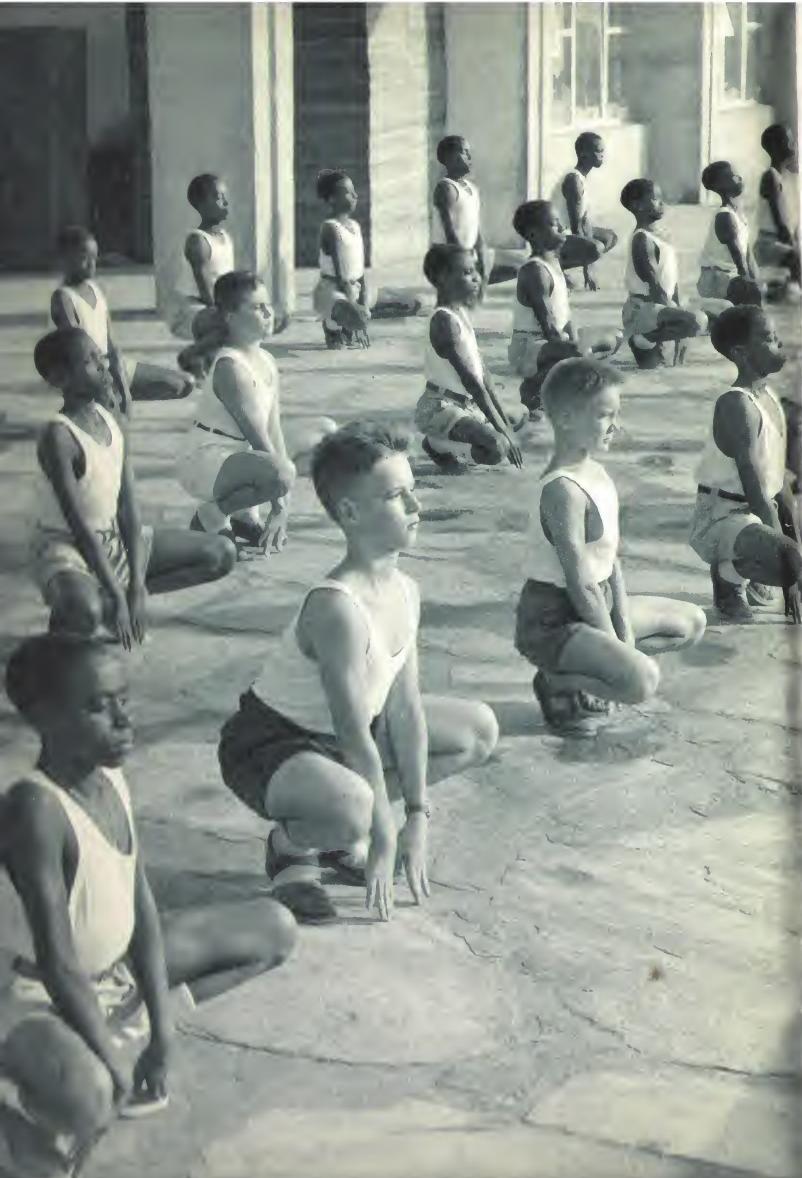
Economic development.

The economic development of the Congo is the achievement essentially of Belgium's business leaders, her engineers, her technicians, and her skilled workmen. They have been greatly aided by the great scientific institutions and by the Colonial Administrative Service, more particularly the territorial agents, to whose unwearying activity and wide-awake attitude great praise is due.

In the heroic days of early colonial development, the quest for the colony's mineral wealth was one of the first thoughts of the pioneers. Even today, though much has been opened up, prospecting activity still has many surprises for prospectors.

To lay the foundations of a civilization based in equality on the rights and duties of man in which there should be no discrimination save what is based on the merits and talents of the individual...





Meantime however, the work of the great experimental and research institutes has made it possible for the inexhaustible resources of the African soil to play an increasing part in the economic structure of the Belgian Congo. The colony's economy is wide open to the world, but an internal market has developed in which free enterprise is now flourishing. A sign of this is the growth of the middle class, both among the white and the black population. It is noteworthy too, that the national income grew by 62 percent between the years 1950 and 1955; and if the value of imports, which supplemented the colony's own resources, is taken into account, the total increase from frs. 46,010 millions (about \$ 920 millions) to 85,890 millions (about \$ 1,718 millions) — an increase of 87 percent in five years. There is no sign of a halt in this continual progress, and the analysis of the 190 balance sheets of Congo companies which have an administrative office in Belgium (i.e. 87 percent. of all Congo companies) shows the following investments in the Belgian Congo as having been made in recent years:—

1951	frs. 3,768 millions ($\pm \$ 75$ millions)
1952	frs. 5,093 millions ($\pm \$ 101$ millions)
1953	frs. 5,670 millions ($\pm \$ 113$ millions)
1954	frs. 4,640 millions ($\pm \$ 92$ millions)
1955	frs. 5,295 millions ($\pm \$ 106$ millions)

The total amount of the subscribed capital in 1956 was 5 percent greater than in the previous year and 80 percent. greater than in 1954

In the Congo, as in other developing countries, continued expansion has called for a close study of the problem of power. There has been no slackening in the development effort scheduled in the ten-year Plan, and this is resulting in an increasingly efficient structure which is helping to lower the cost of power.

Meantime, in the Lower Congo, the prospects which are opening up are of quite a different order of magnitude. They are indeed in line with the great technique and development of the modern world; for

the site at Inga, now that the ill-founded criticisms and shameful suspicions have been forgotten, is forcing itself upon everybody's attention.

I do not need to repeat that the hydro-electric resources of Inga are the biggest and the least costly in the world, and that the site is to be developed progressively under a plan which has been carefully worked out and in which there has never been any question of alienating this great national asset which may prove to be the most brilliant of the trump cards in the hands of the Belgo-Congolese community.

Productivity.

Nowadays there is universal agreement on the importance of increased productivity as a means of attaining a higher standard of civilization and well-being.

The six governments of the C.C.T.A. (1) have determined a programme of research and experiment on the various factors affecting productivity and particularly germane to the position in Africa.

In the Belgian Congo, research into the problems of productivity appears particularly desirable in relation to small and medium-sized undertakings, more particularly in relation to agriculture.

In this field, particular problems arising include the natives' lack of vocational training, sanitary conditions, malnutrition, and general background.

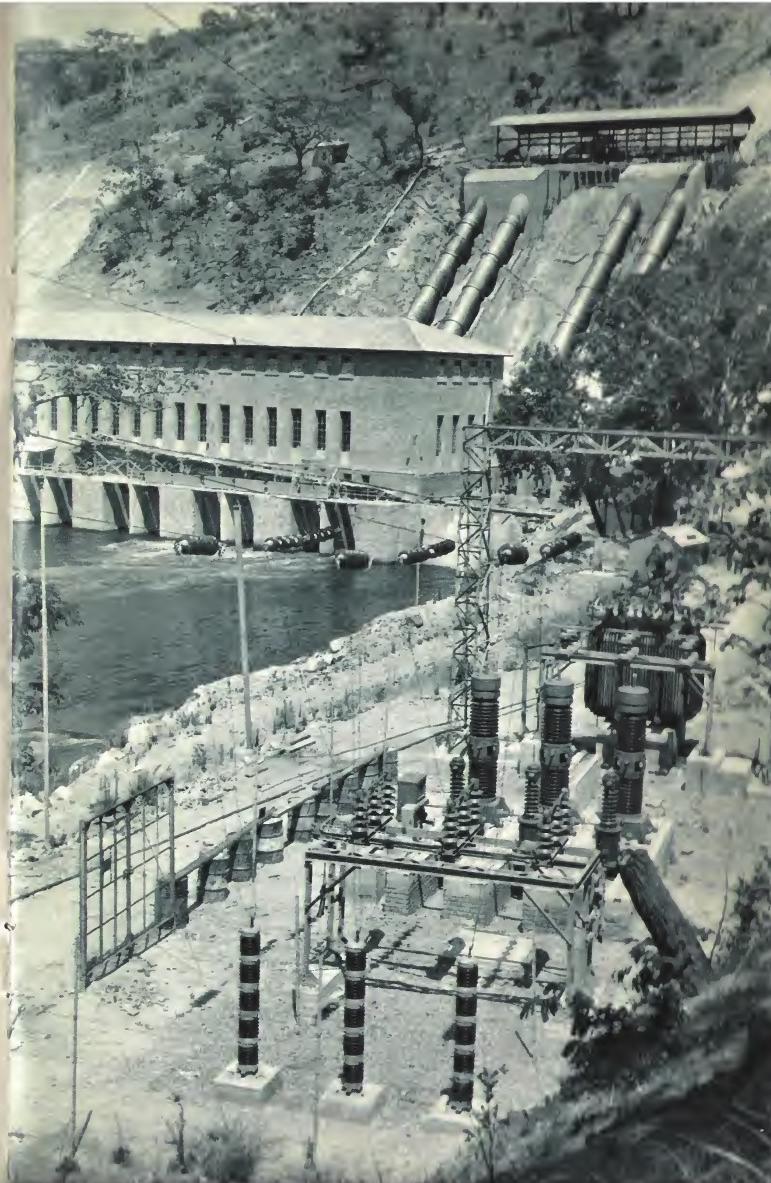
It was considered suitable to create within the framework of the administration in Belgium, an organization composed of persons with special competence in relation to productivity and who also had a knowledge of the Congo.

This organization, will be consulted before the general lines of a general productivity policy are settled. It was formed on October 17, 1956.

The Committees which have been set up are the following:—

(1) Commission for Technical Cooperation South of the Sahara.

Everywhere the forces of nature are being progressively harnessed to take the place of the arduous labour of man.





- The Terminology Committee — the task of which is to define the various concepts and to lay down a common language for the use of the other committees;
- The Committee on small undertakings and artisan establishments. This is divided into four sub-groups. The first of these deals with native-owned agricultural undertakings; the second with European-owned undertakings of the same character, the third with native-owned non-agricultural enterprises and the fourth with European-owned enterprises of the same character;
- The Power Committee;
- The Committee on Absenteeism and the instability of the labour force;
- The Committee on the Development of native consumption requirements;
- The comparative productivity Committee.

The Terminology Committee has now finished its task.

The directives issuing in pursuance of the Productivity policy will have to be of provincial, or in some cases purely local application. This is in line with the general desire to see some effective decentralisation, and also on account of the many local differences in the situation in the Congo.

Social evolution.

I have already described in a number of previous speeches, and also in an unpublished General Report, the main characteristics of the social evolution in the Congo. These are:—

The breaking down, sometimes by specific action, sometimes by natural evolution of a social barrier which came dangerously near to being a colour bar, and which kept the natives on heavy manual work.

The creation of a class of clerical employees, some of whom have succeeded in acquiring a skill at their work which is as good as some of their white colleagues;

The raising of more and more of the manual workers into the skilled labour grades;

The appearance in the urban areas of a coloured middle-class, which has developed quite rapidly, and the incipient formation, which has to a large degree been organised, of an agricultural middle-class, based on co-operation, skilled artisan work and peasant settlements in the sense of African legislation;

The still rather hesitant awakening of collective consciousness among the masses of uprooted natives in the urban settlements;

The clash between the closed economic system of the black peoples and the wide-open economy of the white man. This has been coupled with the contrast between modes of life and habits of thought and feeling as dissimilar as the economic systems;

In the native settlements, and sometimes even in the bush, wherever conditions of work and existence approximate to those of the western world, the tendency among the natives has been to accept and adopt the white man's conceptions in the economic, social and juridical fields;

In consequence, the individual and the monogamous family are tending to take the place of the clan as legal entities. Personal providence and social security go hand in hand, and are replacing the traditional system of mutual help, just as private property is replacing collective property;

Finally, it is the wish of the great majority of the inhabitants in the Congo that the legislation concerning the hiring of labour and social security should be cleared of all traces of racial discrimination.

Social conceptions which came to the surface and finally gained sway in Belgium have been the mainspring of colonial social legislation within the limits set by African conditions and economic developments. This accounts for the fact that the social development Belgium has wrought in central Africa has followed a pattern similar to her own.

As long ago as 1888 a decree law was issued to protect workers and establish the rules of engagement and contracts of service between

A capital importance is assigned to the education and encouragement of African womanhood.





The hydroelectric resources of Inga are the biggest
and the least costly in the world.



the negro population and non natives. In 1889, two further decree laws regulated the recruitment of porters and of workers, and these decrees were revoked and replaced by another dated May 18, 1905, which was in its turn amended by a further decree of June 3, 1906. Further enactments issued in 1910 and finally the legislation was completely recast by a new decree law dated March 16, 1922.

The legal provisions relating to European workers were brought into line with those prevailing in Belgium. They include compulsory sickness and invalidity insurance, which was brought into force by an Order of June 5, 1944; compulsory insurance against accidents at work, by the decree law of December 20, 1945, by which all employers are obliged to contract an insurance with the Colonial Invalidity Fund; compulsory insurance against the risk of vocational sickness and diseases, by decree laws of 1945 and 1947; and the granting of family allowances which were made compulsory and regulated by decree laws of 1948, 1951 and 1953. Meantime, important provisions were brought into the legislation regarding working contracts with natives; the important texts under this head are decree laws of August 12, 1941, December 6 and 28, 1943, March 16, 1944 and July 30, 1945. For the natives, compulsory insurance providing compensation for accidents at work, and vocational diseases, was introduced by a decree of August 1st, 1949 which was amended by an Order of June 24, 1950. This extends the provisions to natives covered by labour contracts, apprenticeship and the river services.

The granting of family allowances was made compulsory and regulated by decree laws and Orders issued in 1951, 1952 and 1953.

In 1946, various Orders were made authorising and regulating native occupational organisations.

An Order dated April 6, 1946 was specially aimed at protecting native workers and looking after their material, cultural and social well-being, and generally to promote a well developed working-class. Under this Order, a native labour and social protection Committee

Trying to improve working conditions...

was set up in each region, it was composed of representatives of the Colonial government, the employers and the native workers.

The decree-laws of 1950 provided the labour inspectorate and also dealt with workers' safety and health conditions. The task of the inspectorate is primarily to secure social justice, see that the law is obeyed and consider what improvements should be made in working conditions.

Since 1954, social legislation has been directed mainly to the improvement of existing provisions regarding social security, and to create a pension scheme and a system of sickness allowances for native workers.

The law regarding natives' accidents at work and occupational diseases was amended by the decree law of June 30, 1954. This measure brings the insurance into play much more expeditiously than before and, from the first day incapacity, the cost of apparatus for prothesis and orthopedic surgery is covered.

The legislation on native labour contracts, which was laid down by the decree of March 16, 1922, has been considerably amended and improved by measures which marked an important stage in the development of a single legislative system to cover both labour and employment contracts.

A decree of July 27, 1955, institutes a system of factory regulations binding upon all employers with 20 or more native workers.

Racial discrimination runs counter to the whole of the present policy. It must be suppressed as soon as possible despite the difficult problems which may arise at the outset. A number of steps have already been taken in this direction. The labour inspectorate provided by the 1950 decree law applies in equal force to native and non native workers; there is no racial distinction in the decree law of March 14, 1957, containing regulations about working hours and providing for a day off on Sundays and public holidays and the Colonial Council recently approved a draft decree law regulating apprenticeship contracts without any racial distinction whatever.



.... The population of the vocational, technical, agricultural and artisanal school



Recent measures have provided for the labour inspectorate to be organised at the level of provincial capitals; its headquarters and general staff however will operate from Leopoldville co-ordinating the decisions reached and ensuring an uniformity in the application of the law.

Promotion of native womanhood.

Among the social questions, there is general agreement in assigning a capital importance to the education and social encouragement of African womanhood. On every step of the educational ladder, a great effort has been made under this head. The first rather hesitant steps were taken in Leopoldville in 1933. A social assistant after laying the foundations for the woman's side of family education, set to work to find how this service could be adapted to the African background. The initiative was a success in the Congo capital, and soon it was imitated in other extra-tribal centres.

In April 1954, there existed 34 women's social centres.

The great majority of these centres were in urban districts; only three of those belonging to the Fonds du Bien-Etre Indigène, and one Government centre in the peasant settlement at Babwa looked after the needs of women in the country.

The number of these women's social centres is now 49, an increase of 15 with regard to April 1954, while the number of rural centres is six (1).

At the present time the different social centres occupy 256 certificated European social workers and assistants, enrolled in Africa and also about one thousand native supervisors (2).

Statistics given in the A.I.M.O. (3) report for 1955 show that 47,000 women were enrolled for the different courses at the women's

(1) The total number of rural social centre is now seven.

(2) At the present time, the different social centres occupy 279 certificated European social workers and assistants, enrolled in Africa, and 1,120 native supervisors.

(3) Native affairs and man-power.

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social centres (1) and nearly 21,000 women had attended the ante-natal and infant welfare consultations during the year.

Effective social work cannot be undertaken on a large scale without an intimate knowledge of the African background. It is for this reason that we have decided to set up a social instructional system in Africa for the training of African social workers.

In the tribal society of Africa, women participated fully in all the political, economic and social activities of their community. It is essential that, in the framework of the modern society which is gradually being created, women should have no smaller influence than they did under the older regime. It is with a view to this that the Government is encouraging the setting up of associations in which white and black women will work together in useful, positive and concrete activities.

The expansion of education.

In the Colonial Committee of the Chamber, I gave a full summary of the Government's policy on the scholastic side of education. On this subject, the honourable rapporteur summed up the discussion as follows:-

« The Minister called attention to the fact that provision had recently been made for a considerable expansion in technical education, amounting in principle to one vocational training school in each territory. It has been decided that secondary and university education should be interracial and the diplomas awarded will have « exactly the same value as those in Belgium ».

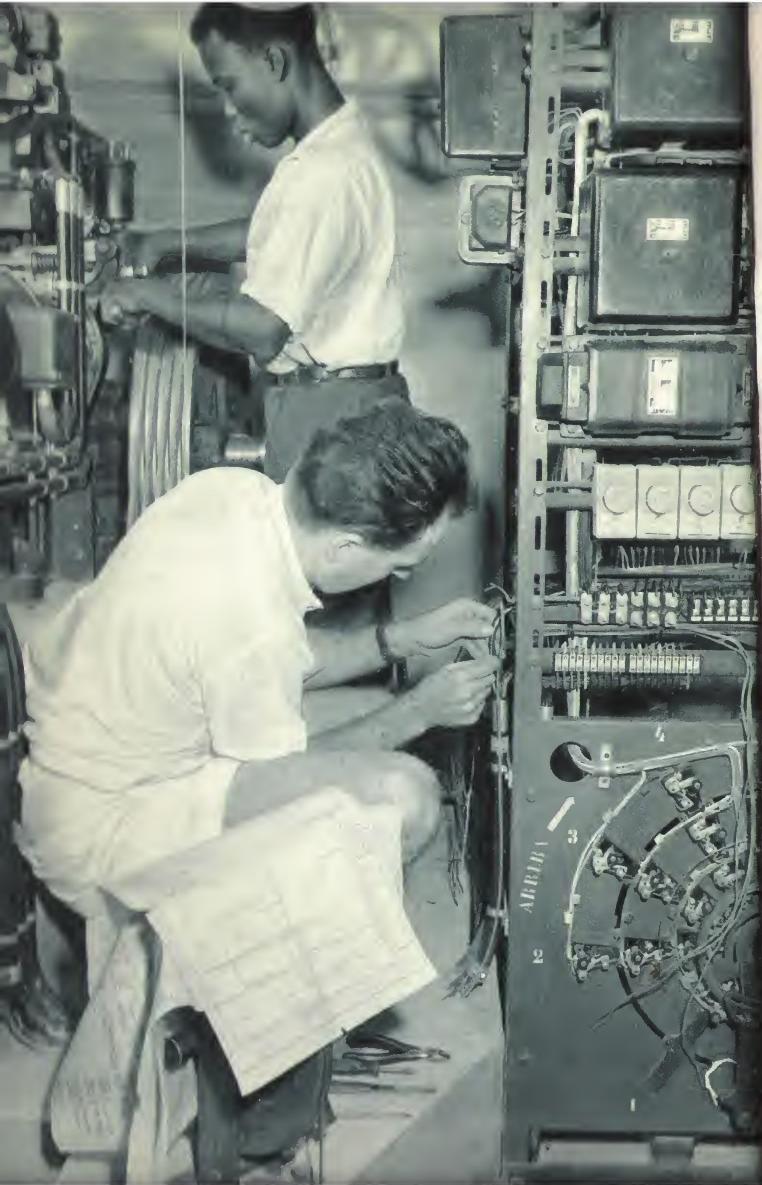
In point of fact the number of pupils attending the vocational, technical, agricultural and artisanal sections increases by more than 25 percent. each year. Moreover, these institutions constitute an educational ensemble which will soon be able to challenge comparison with what is available in the best equipped of European countries.

The government is remorselessly pursuing its national educational policy. Its dominant notes are adaptation to the needs of a modern Congo, emulation in tolerance and a free field of choice for heads

(1) In 1956 there were 49,800 pupils.

The vast majority of the Congo population has welcomed the idea of association between the Blacks and the Whites, based on respect for the dignity of humanity.





of families. It would be a gross libel and quite absurd, to suggest that there has ever been any question of restricting the expansion of any of the private organizations which are devoted to education.

Between 1953 and 1955, indeed, the number of pupils in the official schools increased from 1,913 to 22,681. Nevertheless, during the same period the number in the schools run by companies rose from 6,248 to 7,750; the number in the Protestant mission schools increased from 305,629 to 322,552; and in the Catholic schools from 681,324 to 845,967 (1). The following figures show the credits granted for religious missions as a whole, including the supplementary allowances liberally consented to by the Government:—

Year	Amount
1950	frs. 150,260,427 ($\pm \$ 3,005,208$)
1952	frs. 352,069,952 ($\pm \$ 7,041,387$) (of which frs. 63 millions [about \$ 1 million] in supplementary allowances).
1952 (2)	frs. 566,725,434 ($\pm \$ 11,334,509$) (of which frs. 81 millions [$\pm \$ 1.5$ million] in supplementary allowances).

Most precious of all the testimonies to our policy is undoubtedly that which has just been given by His Eminence Mgr. van Roey in a letter accompanying the Pontifical Decree conveying the Canonical erection of the University of Lovanium in the Belgian Congo. He has recently made this known and, in the course of the letter, the Primate of Belgium says:—

« ... The first of the students have come brilliantly through their examinations for University degrees for 1955 and the Belgian Government has granted them legal recognition. We wish to express our sincere gratitude for this act of generosity and also for the munificent support which the Government has given to the University of Lovanium since its foundation. »

(1) In 1956, the number of pupils in the official schools increased to 31,849, in the companies schools to 71,711, the number in the Protestant mission schools to 341,284 and in the Catholic mission schools to 850,400.

(2) In 1956, 593,233,000 frs. have been spent (98 millions over-credits).

The pith and core of our effort is to achieve an association of interests, of minds and spirits in which there shall be a free development towards whatever political structure best fits the needs of men who are equal before the law and who are moved in their progress by a spirit of fraternity.

We build the Belgian-Congolese community.

At the Conference of the Humanitarian Sciences, in Bukavu, Professor Darryl Forde emphasized that the European is still the chief factor in the evolution of Africa. This is a sociological fact which admits of no dispute. It is a fact that those regions where the density of European population is small or even almost non-existent, there is considerable backwardness in the economic, industrial and agricultural development, and indeed in all branches of development. In other regions, however, where the white population is large enough to have set an example and given the natives part of the lesson of progress, and where co-operation between the two races has borne its abundant fruits, each year's progress towards modern civilization is larger than the last.

This fact is well known to the vast majority of the Congo populations. The idea of association between the Blacks and the Whites, based on respect for the dignity of humanity and without racial distinction, has been greeted with satisfaction and often, indeed, with enthusiasm.

Our generous goodwill is now clearly manifest, and it corresponds with the inner aspirations of the black masses. We will therefore not tolerate action by any person, irresponsibly or by malice aforethought, be he white or black, Belgian or foreign, which may thwart our essentially humanitarian action or corrupt an atmosphere so propitious for concord and co-operation. Without hesitation I call on all authorities in Africa to apply against such persons all the sanctions which the law allows.

This is not a time to be weak or heedless.

Those who have not full faith in Belgium's African mission, who have not the creative enthusiasm, the energy and the capacity for decision, have no place in the Belgian Congo. There are other places in the world where they can find careers suited to their stature.

Belgians of the white races are not imbued with that complex of aristocratic superiority which has done so much damage the world over; and the Black, too, is no more race-minded than the White. It is only from provocations, humiliations, fear and injustice that race-hatreds can spring in all their hideous stupidity. Wherever we find traces of such wretchedness, let it be our task to trace them to their source and extirpate them forever. Such is the course of justice and of wisdom.

« Apart, perhaps, from the pygmies », I said recently, « there are no natives in Belgian Africa. Both the Black and the White population

in Central Africa came from outside at various points in their history, but they are growing more and more conscious that their respective actions lie on the single thread of history, and that the only fecund future lies in their co-operation. Each is equally proud of the greatness of the task undertaken in common. »

In the city of Leopoldville there are some 400,000 inhabitants, white and black. How many of these, from any race, could boast that they are dwelling on their own ancestral soil? None the less, they are attached one and all to the capital city which Belgian initiative has given, and they are proud to be numbered among its inhabitants.

Belgium's work in Africa is a long-term undertaking, and it calls for the co-operation of everybody in a spirit of mutual respect and esteem. Its moral charter is the declaration of the Rights of Man.

The aim of this work is to make a political reality of the Belgo-Congolese community. The foundations of this have already been laid at the level of local communities, as was suggested by the three national political parties represented in this Assembly. The unity of a national territory is no obstacle to the existence of federal, or con-federal, democratic institutions, such as exist in so many countries in the Americas and in modern Europe; or to the subsistence of regional autonomy, as is found in the present-day structure of Italy which is so well adjusted to the autonomy of Sicily and of Sardinia. The pith and core of our effort is to achieve an association of interests, of minds and spirits, in which there shall be a free development towards whatever political structure best fits the needs and aspirations of men who are equal before the law and who are moved in their progress by a spirit of fraternity.

It is easier, indeed, to cultivate the jingo and the fanatic, and to tease hatred with lies, than it is to work patiently at the building of a human society in which wisdom, mutual understanding and welfare shall rule supreme. For my part, however, I refuse to sow the seeds of discord or to create overseas one or several race-minded States whose last state would inevitably be worse than their first. Such a course would be to give the lie to the ideal of our forefathers, and to ruin the very foundations of the work in Africa which they began.

The Government is determined to continue firmly in the policy I have described. In so doing it is convinced that it reflects the will of the vast majority of the nation.



Les Imprimeries C. Van Cortenbergh, 290-292, av. Van Volxem, Brussels.
Printed in Belgium.

